

GREETINGS AND REMARKS

HANS E. RIESSER

Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany

IT is a great honor and privilege for me to be invited tonight when you are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Paul Ehrlich's birthday. I must tell you quite frankly, though, that I was somewhat embarrassed when I received your kind invitation. Here I am speaking before a distinguished group of outstanding physicians and scientists who know more about Paul Ehrlich and his work than I do. I personally, a doctor of civil law only, do not feel qualified to address this assembly on the subject of a medical genius like Professor Ehrlich, but I am very proud that as a Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany I was asked to speak about this great German.

There is little I could tell you about his scientific achievements. You all know that Paul Ehrlich as physician, chemist and biologist devoted all his life to serum research work in the field of contagious diseases. My only personal experience with serum dates back to my early childhood when I had a serious attack of scarlet fever. Five doctors whom my father summoned, gave me up as hopeless. They asked permission to use a newly discovered serum. My father agreed, and I was inoculated with the serum which was made from the blood of a horse. The horse died the following day and I survived. I still remember that I wept when I heard about the poor horse—a white one it was. The case was widely discussed in medical publications and there was some question whether my recovery was due to the serum—or my having the constitution of a horse!

But to get back to Paul Ehrlich. Fortunately I am in a position to say something about his character, his personality, and his charm because members of my family knew him very well. I would like to mention my late brother Otto, a professor of pharmacology at Frankfurt University. And there is another relative of mine connected with Paul Ehrlich: my cousin Professor Ferdinand Blum, himself a great scientist, who was Paul Ehrlich's friend and doctor. Ferdinand Blum who now lives in Zuerich

and is almost ninety years old, is still hard at work. He has been asked to speak at the Frankfurt celebrations in honor of Ehrlich and von Behring. I wrote to him with a request for some details on Ehrlich's life. He replied immediately, and I am going to read you part of his delightful letter:

"Paul Ehrlich had a charming and truly sunny nature. He needed that sun, too. Tempests and upheavals in his life depressed him and disturbed the quiet which he required. Yet, he did not allow the difficulties and obstacles to deflect him from the target which he had set himself. People who knew him only slightly considered him shy, retiring, and a bit of a recluse. Maybe that was due to the way he handled a conversation, and perhaps to his desire to be left alone when pondering a problem. He greatly loved and was grateful for simple entertainment and distraction outside his scientific work, but he also was a man with unfailingly sharp and precise judgment on matters political, social and human. I do not think that Ehrlich ever made a decision unaware of what went on in the world around him; nor do I think that he ever gave anybody wrong advice. He was a thoroughly reliable friend and I keep his friendship in grateful remembrance."

Permit me to add just a few words to Ferdinand Blum's appraisal of Ehrlich. As I speak to you tonight, Ehrlich's personality and achievements have a very special significance to me also in another direction. I hope you will not think me presumptuous if I compare his work to the job which all of us have taken upon ourselves. With all his strength and all his heart Paul Ehrlich fought against the diseases of the body. We too are fighting—against the deadly dangerous disease of the mind emanating from the totalitarian school of thought. On this occasion we pledge ourselves to carry on this fight, confident to succeed.